

## The Mask We Hide Behind by Yaoi\_Boi1

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**Summary:**

His friends just saw him as the happy go lucky guy, the class clown of the Loser's Club. He would do voices, make fun of stupid shit, lied that he banged some chick from school or sleep with their mom. It got to the point that even he forgot sometimes. Tried anything to feel different than how he truly felt. Tried to feel normal. It was a ruse, a persona he spent years perfecting, the one his friends dubbed.

Richie "Trashmouth" Tozier

# 1. Chapter 1

## Author's Note:

This is set when Richie runs away from the arcade because of Henry Bowers. I decided to write this because sometimes the ones that seem the happiest are in fact the saddest. So, I wanted to show that with Richie. That behind those smiles and jokes, he's hurting inside.

Faggot, Henry Bowers' voice echoed in Richie's head as he sat slumped over on the park bench. He glanced around to see if anyone noticed how pitiful he looked. The few people there were blissfully in their own world. Completely unaware of the inner turmoil he was experiencing.

His friends just saw him as the happy go lucky guy, the class clown of the Loser's Club. He would do voices, make fun of stupid shit, lied that he banged some chick from school or sleep with their mom. It got to the point that even he forgot sometimes. Tried anything to feel different than how he truly felt. Tried to feel normal. It was a ruse, a persona he spent years perfecting, the one his friends dubbed.

Richie "Trashmouth" Tozier

Sometimes pieces of himself would slip through though. The real side of Richie, the one behind the mask. When that happened, he would just brush it off as a joke. All the things he said about a certain hypochondriac. As hard as he would try, sometimes Richie, not Trashmouth, would slip through the cracks like drops of water.

Like all the times he 'joked' about him being cute.

Messing with his hair just to feel it between his fingers.

Wrapping an arm around his small shoulders, so he could hold him closer, because he wouldn't risk a hug instead.

All the times he called him 'Edds', despite him insisting that he hated

it.

The comments about how he wanted to sleep his mom, when he was in fact thinking about him instead.

What would the Losers think if he ever decided to peel the mask off. If he showed how sad he felt, whenever Henry Bowers talked about disgusting fags. To talk about how alone he felt sometimes. Especially, when he comes across happy couples holding hands. How they don't have to hide about who they loved. They don't have to look around before they kiss each other. No one pointing and saying harsh things. They don't have to watch over their shoulder in paranoia for Henry Bowers to jump out with a knife.

Richie was tired. Tired of hiding behind a mask. Tired of pretending to be someone else. Tired of being alone. Tired of what strangers would think of him. Tired of not being happy. Tired of hating himself. He was tired being afraid.

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It was Saturday morning, but despite the beautiful day he was feeling a storm of emotions. Richie's palm was sweaty as he held the cordless phone in front of him. He took it from the kitchen into his room for privacy. He sat on his bed, heart thumping so hard that the vein in his neck would throb with each beat. He was done with hiding. Lying to himself how he felt. It was now or never. He took a deep breath and dialed the number by heart.

It rang a few times before a he heard Eddie's familiar voice say, "Hello?"

He cleared his throat before replying, "It's Richie."

"Oh hey, what's up?" Eds said.

"I..uh wanted to talk."

"Well, aren't we talking already, dummy?" Eddie giggled cutely.

"Uh yeah, but I was thinking about more in private."

“Hold on.” He heard the sound of soft footsteps and a door opening and closing. “I’m in my room now.” There was a pause, “Is it about..you know, IT?” Eddie whispered the last part.

“Oh no no. Nothing like that.” He said softly.

“Oh thank god. You had me scared. You’re acting weird though. Well, weirder than normal anyways.” He giggled.

He gulped, “I wanted to hangout.”

“Why didn’t you say so earlier? Have you called the others yet?”

“No, I haven’t.”

“Are the other Losers busy or something?” Eddie asked confused.

“I need to tell you something in private. I think it would be better to tell you in person than on the phone.”

“Why? Are you gonna say how good my mom was last night?” Eddie joked.

“Please, Eddie.” He pleaded.

“Wait. Hold on. Now I know something is wrong. You never call me Eddie. Well, not just Eddie, sometimes you do call me Eddie Spaghetti. Usually you call me Edds. Did you get a girl pregnant or something?” Eddie sounded panicked.

Richie muttered without thought, “That would never happen.”

“What was that?”

“Oh nothing, uh. Could we meet up somewhere?”

“What about the barrens?” Eddie offered.

“Let’s meet at the club house that Ben made.” Richie said.

“Yeah sure. When?”

Richie bit his lip, “I think the sooner the better.”

“OK, Richie. I’ll head out as soon as I can.” Eddie hung up.

Richie looked down as a couple of tears hit the back of his hand and whispered, “Please don’t hate me, Edds.”

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Richie rode up to the club house on his bike and stashed it underneath some overgrown bushes. Not many people come across this area of the barrens, but he wanted to safe than sorry. He waited outside next to the underground entrance of the clubhouse. His heart felt like it was beating a mile a minute. His palms kept getting sweaty, so he wiped it on his jeans while he waited for Eddie.

Eddie arrived on his own bike about five minutes after he did. He noticed where Richie hid his bike and put it right beside it.

Eddie was slightly panting and pulled out the inhaler from his trusty fanny pack. He pressed it to his mouth and deeply inhaled before putting it away. Afterwards, he walked over to Richie. Richie shoved his hands in his pockets to keep them from trembling.

“Hey Rich, What’s up? What’s so important that you couldn’t tell me on the phone?”

“I wanted to say-” Richie looked around nervously. “Could we talk inside, Eddie?”

Eddie’s brows frowned in confused, “Yeah, of course.”

Richie opened the hatch to the club house and coughed when some dust was kicked up. He held it up and motioned for Eddie to go first. Eddie carefully made his way down the small ladder and then Richie went down too and closed the hatch.

“Enough with the suspense, Rich. What’s going on?”

“We’ve been friends like a long time, right?” Richie asked out of nowhere.

“Yeah, since Elementary. Why?”

“We’ll always be friends, right?” He gulped.

“Of course, we’ll always be friends.” Eddie smiled and placed a comforting hand on Richie’s shoulder. Richie flinched at that and slowly pulled his hand back.

“What’s wrong Richie? You’re scaring me.” Eddie’s voice trembled.

“To be honest, I’m scaring me too. I’m afraid. I’m tired of being afraid. I don’t want you to hate me, Edds.” Richie rubbed his own arm.

“I would never hate you, Richie. I promise you that whatever you tell me, I’ll be here for you.” Eddie said quietly.

He took a deep breath and sighed, “You know how I do different voices and joke around a lot. That I like to lie about sleeping with girls from school.”

Eddie looked confused but nodded anyway.

So he continued, “It’s a mask I use to hide behind because I’m afraid you guys would hate me. That you guys would stop being my friends if you knew the real me.” Richie choked out and felt a tear slip past his glasses.

“I don’t want you to ever feel like you have to hide who you are from us. From me. Whatever it is, you can tell me.” Eddie stepped forward and gave him a quick hug.

“Remember when I called you and you asked if I got a girl pregnant? I answered you, but I didn’t think you heard me.” Richie said.

“What did you say?” Eddie asked.

“I said that would never happen.”

“Richie, I’m sure you’ll find a girl that will like you. I mean you’re too young to be a dad, but you’re cute. I think that any girl who doesn’t see that is either blind or stupid.”

Richie started to cry when Eddie said all that, “I-I don’t want to find

a girl, Edds.”

“What? Don’t you like any girls from school at all?” Eddie asked confused.

“I mean I don’t like girls! I don’t want any girl, ever!” Richie’s back hit the wall and he sank down holding his knees crying.

“What?” Eddie stood still looking dumbfounded.

“I’m a faggot, OK?! If you don’t wanna be my friend anymore I understand. Just please, don’t tell anyone. I’ll promise to never talk to you or the others again.” He clutched his chest when a sharp pain erupted. He never experienced a pain like this before. He realized it was heartbreak.

## 2. Chapter 2

At first, he just assumed that Richie was upset about some girl at school for not liking him. He knew that Richie could be somewhat loud and crude, but if you looked past that, you would see how wonderful he could be.

But here he was, showing a side of himself that Eddie wasn't used to seeing. A vulnerable side, one that had doubts and fears. He thought he wasn't acting like himself when he called earlier to meet Eddie. But Richie had confessed that his 'trashmouth' persona was some sorta mask he hid behind.

Eddie felt a pain in his chest at that. He wasn't upset with him. It pained him to think that Richie was hurting inside. How had they not seen it? How come he didn't see it. The pain he must of felt as he hid behind those jokes, the rude comments and pretending he liked girls. Eddie had thought he didn't like any girls from school, but then Richie painfully confessed that he didn't like girls at all.

Richie must have felt alone. He was sure of it, because that's how he felt too. Never quite feeling like you belonged. Like he was outside, looking in. Like a stranger at an uninvited party. Like you had to tiptoe around and hope they didn't realize you didn't belong there. The thought that Richie was the same as him never crossed his mind.

So, Eddie stood there like an idiot while Richie was huddled up in the corner crying his heart out.

Eddie snapped out of his stupor and walked over to Richie. His head buried in his arms and knees sobbing. His body trembled with his cries while he gasped for air between broken sobs.

Eddie sat next to him and turned his body awkwardly to silently wrap his arms around Richie's huddled form. He pressed his face into Richie's shaggy black hair. He felt Richie's lanky arms snake out and wrap around his waist. He seemed to stop crying, but he would sniffle now and then.

Eddie whispered, "If you're done hiding then I am too."



“What are you talking about, Eds?” He croaked out.

He pulled away from the hug slowly and pulled out his inhaler from his fanny pack. “This,” he said while holding it in front of Richie. “This is what I use to hide behind. I use it when I feel scared, for anxiety, when I can’t handle a situation. I even use it when I feel sad and alone. It’s not real. It’s easier to pretend to be something than to look in a mirror and really see yourself. This inhaler is bullshit. It’s not real. I’m done with hiding too.”

He turned away from Richie and threw the inhaler to the other side of the club house. “Fucking gazebos!”

“I still don’t know what you-” Eddie’s small hands flew to each side of Richie’s head and he pressed his lips to Richie. He slipped his hands into shaggy hair as he deepened the kiss. He could taste the slight saltiness still lingering from his dried tears.

He pulled out of the kiss. The awkward angle he was in was starting to hurt him, so he stood up and rubbed at his aching neck.

“Why did you kiss me? Are you pitying me?” Richie muttered out lowly while he sat on the ground.

“I don’t like girls either. I shouldn’t have assumed that you like me just because you like guys. To tell you the truth, I’ve thought about kissing you for years.” Eddie confessed as he felt his face burning.

Richie suddenly stood up and he thought he was going to leave. “I’m sorry, Richie. Don’t be ma-” Richie leaned down and kissed him. A hand held the nape of his neck and the other one held his waist tightly.

They pulled away, their foreheads leaned against each other as their breaths mixed together. Eddie giggled when he noticed that Richie’s thick glasses were fogging up.

Richie panted and then whispered, “Am I dreaming?” Eddie replied by pinching his ass.

Richie gave a startled yelp and Eddie began laughing, “Nope. I don’t think so.” Eddie smirked, “You dream about me, Rich? What kind of

dreams? The not so dry kind?”

“Wouldn’t you like to know, Edds?” Richie smirked back.

He ran his hands down Richie’s chest and rested it over his beating heart. “You never have to hide who you are with me, Richie.” He tilted his head up to catch him in another soft kiss.

Richie placed his hands over Eddie’s and threaded their fingers together. “We don’t have to hide anymore. I love you, Edds.”

“I love you, Richie.” They held each other tightly and felt their hearts beat as one.

Be brave enough to throw away the mask we hide behind and be true to yourself.

The End

### **Author’s Note:**

When I was typing this I kept on calling Richie, Mike instead. Because its the same actor in Stranger Things and last fic was Stranger Things. I accidentally wrote Mike instead of Richie in a sentence but i just caught it and fixed it lol